

AT THE NEWSBOYS' DINNER.

Pen Pictures for the Folks Who Couldn't Be There to Enjoy It.

"No, we ain't goin' to the dinner," said three small boys in ragged clothes and with grumpy expressions, their faces pressed against a shop window. "We don't sell papers; we're rich people."

Then a desire for truth struggled manfully and found expression. "We ain't newsboys an' we ain't got no licenses."

That was why.

The visitors left them, after suitable expressions of regret at their dinnerless condition and went on.

There was no red carpet stretched from entrance to sidewalk's edge; there was nothing of the function, neither powdered footman nor liveried lackey to denote the house of entertainment; but they were unneeded. Even a blind man could have found the way, for at the corner of the street where the Newsboys' Home is situated and where the annual dinner on Washington's Birthday takes place, there was a murmur like the beating of surf on a rocky shore.

At first it was only an inarticulate sound; but as you approached it, it resolved itself into:

"Make a place for me, Joe." "Get in line there!" "What yer doin' here, you ain't got no newsboy's badge?" "Hi, there, look out for the Brooklyn!"

According to Randolph Guggenheimer, who is the patron of these annual "feasts," and the superintendents, managers, helpers, etc., of the Newsboys' Home, the boys are quiet, well behaved, wait their turn without fuss and are, in a word, little angels in disguise—hungry little angels, but still angels.

It was noticeable, however, that the corps of dignitaries took no chances, and a cordon of blue-coated policemen and another corps vested with authority minus the brass buttons punctuated the writhing mass of hungry boys.

This mass numbered about 800 at the hour named on those wireless dinner cards of invitation by which the boys were notified that there was "somethin' doin'." Eight hundred to begin with, but it would require an able bodied census taker to state how many were there before the close

In the room at the head of the stairs chaos reigned, which after a while resolved itself to the unaccustomed eye into some kind of order.

There were long tables filled with boys, plain, ordinary boys, most of them dirty, all of them hungry and with few exceptions healthy, normal specimens of humanity, whom life in the open air and three turkey dinners a year anyway keep in good hygienic condition.

There were boys to the right of you, boys to the left of you; and like the cannon of Balaklava there was continued noise and protest.

There is only room for a couple of hundred at a time and in consequence pandemonium was restrained on the stairs, in the halls and in the upper room.

The appetite of the small boy will ever be a marvel, but his standing capacity runs it a close second. Hour after hour he stands in his place, his side against a wall, his elbows planted firmly in the boy behind him and his forehead butting into the one in front, immovable as the eternal hills.

Visions of turkey, of round succulent mince pies, of slabs of ice cream, and yellow oranges not too big to stuff into the pocket keep up his courage and heart when the pangs of hunger become almost too insistent.

He knows that his confères will not linger to discuss the last phase of the political or social situation. Neither will they follow the last rules for a long life and perfect digestion and masticate each mouthful forty times. No such frightful vision appeals to the waiting gues there. If he gives the subject a passing thought, it will soon be quelled into annihilation by experience, for he has attended newsboys' dinners before and he knows that the rest boil; their food just as quickly as they can.



THE PASSING OF THE PIE.

of the evening and the skinning of the last drumstick.

Up the long stairway, boys were ranged who greeted you with:

"Say do you know if there's ice cream?" "Any mince pie?" or "Tell 'em to get a move on; we're waitin'."

The Fun She Has and the Beans She Has Between 2 and 3 P. M.—"Brokers From Wall Street" All of 'Em, and Bedella Plays Them for Angels for the Ball.

If you came from "way up in the country, and for the first time saw the telephone girl pulling out the switchboard plugs and putting them in hour after hour, recording each call on a slip of paper, and meanwhile appearing her many irascible or petulant customers, you might say:

"Gracious, but those poor telephone girls must have a mighty unhappy life!"

Perhaps one of these telephone girls will publish her diary some day. Then will the idea of unhappy lives and dismal existences fade away. For the telephone girl has a whole heap of fun.

The biggest part of her fun is the dancing. All telephone girls dance. That is, no one educated as to the telephone girl's way of doing things ever heard anything to the contrary. And she is never so happy as when she is engaged in arranging a ball or in dancing at one. In fact, the bosses of the telephone company decided, some time ago, that the girls were spending too much time and energy in getting up dances, and an edict went forth that there must be no more "telephone girls' balls."

There weren't any for about two weeks. At the end of that time the dances were on again. The only difference was that the tickets didn't admit to, say, "the ball given by the young ladies of the Cortlandt street exchange," but to the dance of some club whose name the invited had probably never heard before. Of course it didn't take long for those interested to disseminate accurate information as to the exact character of the affair.

The telephone bosses soon realized that their rule hadn't done any good. Now the rule is the dearest sort of a letter, and dances are held, as before, under the telephone exchange names. There was one the other day at Lyric Hall, the Sixth avenue home of Torschore.

This particular ball was held in the afternoon, beginning at the ridiculously childish hour of 2 P. M., the hour of pinafors and knickerbockers. This was because the

and it is then, out into the night, to get a fresh appetite and make a fresh assault on the food breastworks.

So he waits until finally patience is rewarded and he meets the blue-coated Cerberus face to face at the door.

Cerberus has a way of his own of greeting the coming guest. He takes him by the collar deftly and firmly and flings him inside the door.

There is nothing a small boy likes quite so much as the feel of a policeman's fingers when he hasn't done anything wrong. Psychologists could find reason in it perhaps. At any rate it exists. You could see it in the faces of the catapulted boys as they regained their balance and tore toward the tables.

The fed went out at the right and the unfed came in at the left. The former were too apologetic and aldermanic to do more than cast bloated eyes and rigid stares at their companions. They didn't say a word. This was not due to any latent lack of politeness. They simply couldn't, that is all. When the vocal chords haven't room to work, what do you expect?

For some occult reason the Brooklyn boys put upstairs and the New York boys kept downstairs. Those who deal with newsboys know their habits, so there was probably reason in this which did not meet the unaccustomed eye.

Some of the boys were unnaturally clean, they had actually had their faces and hands washed; and one boy had on a white sweater



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as rapidly as he should, when the time came the mince pie was placed on top and the ice cream rose proudly to the summit. Most of the boys leaned over and drank the tea without raising the bowls—that takes time—and all of them stuffed the oranges into their pockets.

Their method of eating celery did not suggest the etiquette columns in ladies' magazines, some way. Perhaps it was not intended to.

The stalk of celery was held in one hand and the salt shaker kept busy in the other. When they had finished from the mouth of each flowered a green shrub. Down the length of the narrow tables these sprouting gashes looked like harbingers of spring.

A small boy, so tiny that his head hardly reached the edge of the table, adorned with a huge newsboy's badge, admitted his guilt, while he clung desperately to the rim of his well filled plate.

"I ain't a newsboy, but my frien' gave me his badge when he got troo."

The visitor patted the wizened little face. "Just fill yourself up as quickly as you can, nobody'll say a word."

The superintendent acknowledged that, while the dinner was presumably given for the newsboys, it was seldom that a boy was turned away—"just so he's a boy, that's all we want."

"Don't any of the boys eat two dinners?" "Oh, I expect there are plenty of ringers. Ringers? Yes, that's what the boys call one that gets in the second time. You know, on the racetrack, when a horse that is known by one name is entered under another, so that people won't know his record, he is called a ringer."

Just at that second the visitor's eye alighted on the livid face of a fourteen-year-old who was gazing, with a near approach to disgust as a newsboy's face

which spoke eloquently of a recent tubbing. Their ages ranged from 5 and 6 up to 16. Some of the older boys waited on the tables, assisting a corps of young women, who in pretty gowns and white aprons took charge of the service.

A few visitors, open eyed and curious, wandered about. One woman actually had tears in her eyes. They were wasted. There is many a millionaire who would willingly part with a good, round sum to enjoy his dinner as every one of those newsboys did.

The dinner provided consisted of roast turkey, cold ham, mashed potatoes and turnips, bowls of tea about the size of the boys' heads, circular mince pies, an orange at each plate, and to top it with, a parallelgram of tri-colored ice cream wrapped in thick white paper. Down the length of the table stalks of celery rose majestically.

Many of the boys did not, either through ignorance or because time was pressing, bother to unwrap the ice cream; they ate right through the paper. As Robert Edson says of the drama, they "like to get their teeth into things."

"How do they get their hands so dirty?" asked a visitor of the superintendent.

"Oh, just because they're boys, I suppose," was the answer.

Of course an ordinary amount, you expect that, but you would certainly think that the rain would wash some of the dirt off after a while.

A small boy laid his grimy paws against his companion's, having heard the remark. "Mine's dirtier than yours."

"Huh! you're two years older."

The boys were not troubled with an entanglement of forks and knives; the mental problem of the fashionable diner out when he meets a new variety of silver did not assail their young spirits.

A steel fork and knife, a tin salt shaker,

a plate and bowl was the kit of each. In too ecstatic moments the fork and knife, impeding luxuries, were laid aside or dropped on the floor, whichever was handier, and the fingers and fists were employed. Neither did the waiters pay much attention to serving the food in courses. The turkey and ham came in together on the plate—if it wasn't spilled on the floor en passant—the waiters and waitresses would dab a bit of turpentine at the side, pour out the tea from a huge can, and, if the boy had not eaten

could assume in the presence of food, at his well turkified plate.

His attitude was abjectly apathetic and his jaws seemed to have lost their ancient cunning.

"I'm going to ask him."

"Look here, George, have you had a dinner before this evening?"

The small boy slowly dropped his eyelids in a motion of sick assent. It was not a look. It was simply his sole, remaining method of conversation.

One of the waiters at that moment swooped down on the sinner and poked him sharply in the ribs.

"Look here! I tell you before not to come back; this is the fifth dinner you've had, and we ain't givin' any more'n two. Get out!"

The boy simply couldn't; he was like the drunken sailor who was requested to come across the street.

"Come across the street," he yelled, frantically clinging to his lamp post. "It's as much as I can do to stay where I am."

Two other boys, who had only had one dinner apiece and were still capable of motion, wiped their sleeves across their mouths and assisted him into the open air, where imagination simply refused to follow him.

The newsboy badge, which was supposed to be worn by each diner, consisted of a strip of white ribbon, with letters of blue, "Newsboys' Dinner, Feb. 22, 1904," printed on it. At one end was a photograph in



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mouth full, but the newsboys were not proving the truth of that statement, they were doing one thing and doing it thoroughly and—Well, therein lies success.

Once a waitress with turquoise rings, a lot of white lace and blue ribbons yelled warningly to one of the managerial corps: "Keep your eye on that basket of pie."

An unconscious poetess of the primitive One of the amateur waiters was scraping a lot of debris over the head of a small boy who sat short, and walked equally so, and was invisible to the scraper, who pursued his task with an esprit de corps beautiful to witness. It reminded the looker on of the domestic service of the average agency.

Another was pouring warm tea, while he kept up a brisk conversation over his shoulder, on the grimy paws of a diner-to-be, who was watching the little pools of tea slowly loosen the grime. Apparently he had not seen his hand for a long time and it afforded him the delight of the novel and unexpected.

The boys, who were slight and straight as young saplings when they came in, went out looking knobby and bumpy, as if ready for a surgeon's knife which would